

Claims

1. A method of inter-area rekeying of encryption keys in secure mobile multicast communications, in which a Domain Group Controller Key Server (Domain GCKS) distributes Traffic Encryption Keys (TEK) to a plurality of local Group Controller Key Servers (local GCKS) serving respective group key management areas, and said local Group Controller Key Servers forward said Traffic Encryption Keys, encrypted using Key Encryption Keys (KEK_i , KEK_j) that are specific to the respective local Group Controller Key Server (local GCKS_i, GCKS_j), to group members situated in the respective group key management areas, said local Group Controller Key Servers (GCKS_i, GCKS_j) constituting Extra Key Owner Lists (EKOL_i, EKOL_j) for said group key management areas (area_i, area_j) that distinguish group members (MM_i, MM_j) possessing Key Encryption Keys (KEK_i , KEK_j) and situated in the corresponding group key management area (area_i, area_j) from group members (MM_{ij}) possessing Key Encryption Keys (KEK_i) that were situated in the corresponding group key management area (area_i) but are visiting another area (area_j),

characterised in that said local Group Controller Key Servers forward said Traffic Encryption Keys (TEK) to group members (MM_{ij}) visiting the respective group key management areas (area_j) encrypted using a Visitor Encryption Key (VEK_j) that is specific to the respective local Group Controller Key Server (GCKS_j) and is different from said Key Encryption Key (KEK_j).
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, and comprising rekeying said Traffic Encryption Keys (TEK) after rekeying said Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j).

3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said local Group Controller Key Servers ($GCKS_i$, $GCKS_j$) rekey a Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) by a process including sending a new Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) to
5 current group members encrypted using the current Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) and to visiting group members using the Visitor Encryption Key (VEK_i , VEK_j).
4. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein said local Group Controller Key Server $GCKS_i$ sends the Visitor Encryption Key (VEK_i) rather than the
10 Key Encryption Key (KEK_i) to new members joining the group via $area_i$.
5. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said local Group Controller Key Server ($GCKS_i$, $GCKS_j$) rekey a Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) by a process including sending said new Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) selectively to existing group members situated in the corresponding group
15 key management area ($area_i$, $area_j$).
6. A method as claimed in claim 3 or 5, wherein said local Group Controller Key Servers ($GCKS_i$, $GCKS_j$) rekey a Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) by a process including sending said new Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) to
20 existing group members using multicast messages and to visiting group members over a different secure channel.
7. A method as claimed in any of claims 3 to 6, wherein rekeying a Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) comprises said local Group Controller Key Servers ($GCKS_i$, $GCKS_j$) sending a new Key Encryption Key (KEK_i , KEK_j) selectively to current group members currently situated in the
25 corresponding group key management areas ($area_i$, $area_j$).

8. A method as claimed in any preceding claim and including said local Group Controller Key Servers (GCKS_i, GCKS_j) constituting Visitor Key Owner Lists (VKOL_i, VKOL_j) for said group key management areas (area_i, area_j) that distinguish group members (MM_i, MM_j) possessing Visitor Encryption Keys (VEK_i, VEK_j) and situated in the corresponding group key management area (area_i, area_j) from group members (MM_{ij}) possessing Visitor Encryption Keys (VEK_i) that were situated in the corresponding group key management area (area_i) but are visiting another area (area_j).
9. A method as claimed in claim 8 wherein said Extra Key Owner Lists (EKOL_i, EKOL_j) and said Visitor Key Owner Lists (VKOL_i, VKOL_j) comprise lists of the group members (MM_{ij}) possessing Key Encryption Keys (KEK_i), respectively Visitor Encryption Keys (VEK_i, VEK_j), that were situated in the corresponding group key management area (area_i) but are visiting another area (area_j).
10. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein a group member (MM_{ij}) that was visiting another group key management area (area_j) returns to an area (area_i) for which it possesses a corresponding Key Encryption Key (KEK_i) or Visitor Encryption Key (VEK_i) before expiry of a validity period set by the corresponding Group Controller Key Server (GCKS_i) without said corresponding Group Controller Key Server (GCKS_i) rekeying said Key Encryption Key (KEK_i).